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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the relationship between sport and the aesthetic. It traces the logical character of the concept of the aesthetic as it applies to sport. A salient characteristic of the concept of the aesthetic is revealed by examining the aesthetic in relation to works of art, and this is then applied to the consideration of sporting activities from the aesthetic point of view. The suggestion is made that sports can be divided into two categories according to the relative significance of the aesthetic. The significance of the context for the assessment of the aesthetic quality of a particular physical movement is stressed, and it is submitted that this has important consequences for what can reasonably be said about the aesthetic feeling involved in sporting activities. Finally, the question is asked whether sports in general, or any particular sporting activities can legitimately be regarded as forms of art. (Author/RC)

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THE AESTHETIC IN SPORT

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Introduction.

There appears to be an increasing interest in looking at various sporting activities from the aesthetic point of view. In this paper I want to examine the relationship between sport and the aesthetic, and to attempt to sketch the logical character of this way of considering physical activities. My method of approach will be to trace out an important logical characteristic of paradigm cases of objects of the aesthetic attitude, namely works of art, and go on to see whether, or to what extent, it is applicable to sport.

Concept not content.

First, it might well be asked whether it is possible to consider all sports from the aesthetic point of view, when one takes account of the great and increasingly varied range of such activities. That question at least can be answered clearly in the affirmative, for one can look at any object or activity from the aesthetic point of view - cars, houses, mountains, even mathematical proofs and philosophical arguments.

This raises a point about which it is important to be clear at the outset, which is that it is less conducive to error to regard the aesthetic as a concept rather than a content - as a way of perceiving an object or activity rather than a constituent feature of that object or activity. One sometimes hears talk of the aesthetic content of an activity, which gives the misleading impression of the aesthetic as an element which could be added or subtracted. This misconception is closely related to the pernicious assumption that there must be some common property or set of properties in all those objects which can properly be said to be of aesthetic interest. This sometimes leads to suspicions by the scientifically minded that those who are concerned with the aesthetic must be up to something mistily metaphysical, since the presence of this aesthetic content cannot be verified by scientific procedures. These surpicions

are without foundation, for, despite the dubious metaphysics of much writing on the subject, aesthetic judgments, like any other judgments, are intelligible only if they are answerable to what is in principle empirically verifiable. Yet that is not to say that they must be scientifically verifiable, since that is not the only way of considering what is available to sensory perception. A car may be assessed from the point of view of performance - road-holding, acceleration etc. - for which scientific testing may be important. But such tests would be quite inappropriate for answering questions about its attractive appearance. Nevertheless, such questions would require answers which appealed to observable features of the car. Questions of its appearance come under a different aspect, they are answered in a different way.

The aesthetic concept.

Although anything can be considered from the aesthetic aspect, some activities and objects are more centrally of aesthetic interest than others. Works of art, to take a paradigm case, are primarily of aesthetic interest, although even they can be considered from other points of view. For instance, paintings are commonly considered as an investment. So what is it to look at something from the aesthetic point of view? What is it which marks off this from other ways of looking at objects? One important characteristic which has been the subject of some attention in recent philosophy is that the aesthetic is a non-functional or non-purposive concept. To take a central example again, when we are considering a work of art from the aesthetic point of view we are not considering it in relation to some external function or purpose it serves. It cannot be evaluated aesthetically according to its degree of success in achieving some such extrinsic end. By contrast, when a painting is considered as an investment, then it is assessed in relation to an extrinsic end, namely that of maximum appreciation in financial value. Its success is determined by the way other investments, say in stocks

and shares, increase in monetary value.

This characteristic of the aesthetic immediately raises an insuperable objection to theories which propose an oversimple relation between sport and the aesthetic by identifying them too closely. For example it is sometimes claimed that sport just is an art form (for examples see Anthony[1]) and sometimes that the aesthetic is the unifying concept or characteristic in all the activities subsumed under the heading of physical education (see Carlisle[2]). But there are many sports, indeed the great majority, which are like the painting considered as an investment in that there is an identifiable aim or purpose which is of far greater importance than the way it is accomplished. That is, the manner of achievement of the primary purpose is of little or no significance as long as it comes within the rules. For example, it is normally far more important for a football or hockey team that a goal is scored than how it is scored. In very many sports of this kind the overriding factor is the achievement of an external end, since that is the mark of success. In such sports the aesthetic is incidental.

This non-purposive character of the aesthetic is often misunderstood. Such a misunderstanding is manifested in the commonly supposed consequence that therefore there can be no purpose or point in art. The presupposition underlying this misunderstanding is that an activity can intelligibly be said to be of some point or value only in relation to some external purpose towards which it is directed. Now in cases where such an extrinsic end is the primary consideration, evaluation does depend on it. As we have seen, a painting considered solely as an investment would be evaluated entirely according to its degree of success in achieving maximum capital appreciation. Where the attainment of the end is the overriding consideration, the means of attaining it is irrelevant. It would not matter, for instance, what sort of painting it were as long as the end were realised. Similarly, if someone wants to improve the petrol consumption of his car by

changing the carburetter, the design of the new one, and the materials from which it is made are unimportant as long as it succeeds in giving maximum mileage per gallon.

However, the purpose of art cannot be specified in this way, although the misapprehension we are now considering stems from the mistaken assumption that the point of an activity must somehow be identifiable as an end or purpose apart from the activity itself. Yet where art, or more generally the aesthetic is concerned, the distinction between means and end is inapplicable. For instance, the question "What is the purpose of that novel?", can be answered comprehensively only in terms of the novel itself. It might be objected that this is not entirely true, since the purpose of some novels could be given as, for example, exposing certain deleterious social conditions. But this objection misses the point I am trying to make, for if the purpose is the external one of exposing those social conditions then it could equally well, or perhaps better, be realised in other ways, such as the publication of a social survey or a political speech. The report of the social survey is evaluated by reference to its purpose of effectively conveying the information, whereas this would be absurd as a factor in one's aesthetic appreciation of a novel. To put the same point another way, from the point of view of efficient conveying of information the precise form and style of writing of the report is unimportant except in so far as it affects the achievement of that purpose. One report could be as good as another, although the style of writing or compilation was different from, or even inferior to, the other. There could not be a parallel situation in art in which, for example, one poem might be said to be as good as another though not so well written. This is an aspect of the complex problem of form and content in the arts. To put it briefly, there is a peculiarly intimate connection between the form of an object of aesthetic appreciation, i.e. the particular medium of expression, and its content, i.e. what is expressed in it. So that in

art there cannot be a change of form of expression without a corresponding change in what is expressed. It is important to recognise that this is a logical point. For even if one way of writing the report is the clearest and most efficient, this is only contingent matter since it is always possible that a better method may be devised. But it is not a contingent matter that the best way of expressing the content of One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich is in the particular form of that novel. So that the question becomes "What is the purpose of this particular way of exposing the social conditions?" The end cannot be specified as "exposing such and such social conditions", but only as "exposing such and such social conditions in this particular way and no other". And to give a comprehensive account of what is meant by "in this particular way and no other" one would have to produce nothing less than the whole novel. The end cannot be identified apart from the manner of achieving it, and that is another way of saying that the presupposition encapsulated in the question, of explanation in terms of purposive action directed onto an external end, is unintelligible in the sphere of aesthetics. In short, in an important sense the answer to "What is the purpose of that novel?" will amount to a rejection of the question.

A further objection, which has important implications for the aesthetic in sport, might be that in that case how can we criticise a work of art if it can be justified only in terms of itself and there is nothing else with which it can be compared? There is a great deal to be said about the common misapprehension that to engage in critical reasoning is necessarily to generalise. It is sufficient for my argument to recognise that critical appreciation of art consists largely of giving reasons why particular features contribute so effectively to, or detract from, this particular work of art. The important point for our purposes is to see again that the end is inseparable from the means of achieving it, for any suggested improvement is given in terms of the particular work of art in

question. Another way of putting this point is to say that every feature of a work of art is relevant to the aesthetic assessment of it, whereas when we are judging something as a means to an end, there are irrelevant features of the means or equally effective alternative means, of achieving the required end. To say that X is an irrelevant feature is always a criticism of a work of art, whereas this is not true of a functional object.

It is true that the aim in a sport cannot be considered in isolation from the rules or norms of that particular sport. Scoring a goal in hockey is not just a matter of getting the ball between the opponents' posts, but requires conformity to the laws of the game. Such requirements are implicit in the meaning of the term "scoring a goal". Nevertheless, in contrast to a work of art, within those limits there are many ways of achieving the end, of scoring a goal, in hockey.

The gap: purposive and aesthetic sports.

At this point we need to direct our attention to the difference between types of sporting activities with respect to the relative importance of the aesthetic. On the one hand there are those sports, which I shall call "purposive" and which form the great majority, where the aesthetic is relatively unimportant. This category would include football, climbing, track and field events, orienteering and squash. In each of these sports the purpose can be specified independently of the manner of achieving it as long as it conforms to the limits set by the rules or norms - for example, scoring a goal and climbing the Eiger. Even in such sports as these, of course, certain moves or movements, indeed whole games or performances, can be considered from the aesthetic point of view, but it is not central to the activity. If we were to ask a hockey player, on the eve of an important match, "Which would you prefer, to score three goals in a clumsy manner, or to miss them all with superbly graceful movements?", there is little doubt what the answer would be, at

least in most cases. In sports of this type the aesthetic aspect is not normally the primary one, which is the achievement of the purpose which defines the game.

On the other hand, there is a category of sports in which the aim cannot be specified in isolation from the aesthetic, for example, trampolining, gymnastics, figure skating and diving. I shall call these "aesthetic" sports since they are similar to the arts in that their purpose cannot be considered apart from the manner of achieving it. There is an intrinsic end which cannot be identified apart from the means. In formal gymnastics the end is not simply to get over the box or to turn a somersault if, for example, one were to do so in a clumsy way and collapse afterwards in an uncontrolled manner. It is not incidental but central to these sports how one performs the appropriate movements. The end cannot be specified, for instance, as "getting over the box", but only in terms of the way in which this end is to be achieved. Indeed, aesthetic evaluative content is already built into terms like "vault" and "dive". To vault over a box is not the same as to jump over it, or to get over it somehow or other. "Vault" incorporates implicit aesthetic norms. Similarly, not any way of dropping into the water would count as a dive. One has to satisfy at least to a minimal extent the aesthetic requirement built into the meaning of the term for a performance to count as even a bad dive.

Now, there seems to be a common tendency, on both sides of the Atlantic, to distinguish between these two types of sports in terms of competition. For example, in an interesting article on this topic Reid[3] distinguishes between what I have called purposive and aesthetic sports in the following way: "Games come at the end of a kind of spectrum. In most games, competition against an opponent (individual or team) is assumed ... At the other end of the spectrum there are gymnastics, diving, skating ... in which grace, the manner in which the activity is carried

out, seems to be of central importance." But competition in Olympic gymnastics, skating and diving can be every bit as keen as it can in hockey. Reid is adopting the prevalent but obviously mistaken practice of contrasting the competitive with the aesthetic. But, to take a paradigm case, there are even competitive music festivals. Moreover, one cannot fail to notice, on occasion, that competition between dance companies and between rival dancers within the same company, can be as intense, and as nasty, as it can in hockey.

Closing the gap.

We can now return to the original question concerning the characterisation of the aesthetic way of looking at sport. By examining the paradigm cases of sports in which the aesthetic is inseparable from what the performer is trying to achieve, we might hope to discover aspects of our way of considering them which can be found to apply even to purposive sports, when they are looked at aesthetically.

In figure skating, diving, trampolining and Olympic gymnastics it is of the first importance that there should be no wasted energy, no superfluous movements. Champion gymnasts, like Olga Korbutt and Ludmilla Tourischeva not only perform striking physical feats, but do so with such remarkable economy and efficiency of effort that it sometimes looks effortless. There is an intensive concentration of the gymnast's effort so that it is all directed precisely and concisely onto that specific task. Any irrelevant movement or excessive expenditure of energy would detract from the quality of the performance as a whole, just as superfluous or exaggerated words, words which fail to contribute with maximum compression of meaning to the total effect, detract from the quality of a poem as a whole.

However, even in the case of the aesthetic sports there is still, though no doubt to a very limited, extent, an externally identifiable aim, 10

for example the requirements set by each particular movement, and by the particular group of movements in gymnastics. Now it might be thought that it would be justifiable to regard such stringencies as analogous to, say, the form of a sonnet. That is, it may be thought more appropriate to regard them as setting a framework within which the performer has the opportunity to reveal his expertise in moving gracefully than as an externally identifiable aim. There is certainly something in this notion, but it is significant that there is no analogy in aesthetic sports with poetic licence. The poet may take liberties with the sonnet form without necessarily detracting from the quality of the sonnet, but if the gymnast deviates from the requirements of, say, a vault, however gracefully, then that inevitably detracts from the standard of the performance. Nevertheless, the main point for our purposes is that even if, in the aesthetic sports, the means never quite reaches the ultimate of complete identification with the end which is such an important distinguishing feature of the concept of art, it at least closely approximates to such an identification. The gap between means and end is almost, if not quite, completely closed.

Now I want to suggest that the same consideration applies to our aesthetic appreciation of sports of the purposive kind. However successful a sportsman may be in achieving the principal aim of his particular activity, our <u>aesthetic</u> acclaim is reserved for him who achieves it with maximum economy and efficiency of effort. We may admire the remarkable stamina and consistent success of an athlete such as Zatopek, but he was not an aesthetically attractive runner because so much of his movement seemed irrelevant to the ideal of most direct accomplishment of the task. His style was regarded as ungainly because there were extraneous waggles, rolls or jerks which seemed wasteful in that they were not concisely aimed at achieving the most efficient use of his energy.

So to consider the purposive sports from the aesthetic point of view

is to reduce the gap between means and end. It is, as nearly as possible, to telescope them into the ideal of unity. From a purely purposive point of view any way of winning, within the rules, will do, whereas not any way of winning will do as far as aesthetic considerations are concerned. There is a narrower range of possibilities available for the achievement of the end in an aesthetically pleasing way, since the end is no longer simply to win, but to win with the greatest economy and efficiency of effort. Nevertheless, the highest aesthetic satisfaction is experienced and given by the sportsman who not only performs with graceful economy, but who also achieves his purpose. The tennis player who serves a clean ace with impeccable style has, and gives to the spectator, far more aesthetic satisfaction than when he fractionally faults with an equally impeccable style. In the case of the purposive sports there is an objectively specifiable framework, i.e. one which does not require the sort of judgment to assess achievement which is necessary in the aesthetic sports. Maximum aesthetic success still requires the attainment of the end, and the aesthetic in any degree requires direction on to that end, but the number of ways of achieving such success is reduced in comparison with the purely purposive interest of simply accomplishing the end in an externally specifiable sense.

The aesthetic pleasure which we derive from sporting events of the purposive kind, such as hurdling and putting the shot, is, then, derived from looking at, or performing, actions which we take to be approaching the ideal of totally concise direction towards the required end of the particular activity. Skiing provides a good example. The stylish skier seems to float, his body automatically accommodating itself, apparently without conscious effort on his part, to the most appropriate and efficient positions for the various types and conditions of terrain. By contrast, the skiing in a slalom race often appears ungainly because it seems to be unnecessarily forced. The skier in such an event achieves greater speed, but only by the expenditure of a disproportionate amount of additional

effort. Similarly, athletes at the end of a distance race often abandon the smooth, economical style with which they have run the greater part of the race. They achieve greater speed but at disproportionate cost, since irrelevant movements appear - the head rolls, the body lurches etc... In rowing, too, some oarsmen can produce a faster speed with poor style but more, if less effectively produced, power. Even though it is wasteful, the net effective power may still be greater than that of the oarsman who directs his more limited gross power with far more efficiency. It is often said that a good big 'un will beat a good little 'un. It is also true in many sports, unfortunately in my view, that a poor big 'un may well beat a far better little 'un.

Perhaps these considerations do something to explain the heightened aesthetic awareness which is achieved by watching slow-motion films and television replays, since (a) we have more time to appreciate the manner of the performance, and (b) the object of the action, the purpose, in an extrinsic sense, becomes less important. That is, our attention is directed more to the character of the action than to its result. We can see whether and how every detail of every movement in the action as a whole contributes to making it the most efficient and economical way of accomplishing that particular purpose. A smooth, flowing style is more highly regarded aesthetically because it appears to require less effort for the same result than a jerky one. Nevertheless, as we mentioned above, achievement of the purpose is still important. However graceful and superbly directed the movements of a pole-vaulter, our aesthetic pleasure in his performance is marred if he knocks the bar off.

One additional and related factor is that some people naturally move gracefully whatever they may be doing, and this may contribute to the aesthetic effect of their actions in sport. If I may be pardoned for the outrageous pun, Muhammad Ali provides a striking example.

Several questions remain. For example, why do we regard some events as less aesthetically pleasing than others, i.e. where we are not comparing actions within the same context of direction on to a common end, but comparing actions in different contexts? For instance, in my view the butterfly stroke in swimming, however well performed, seems less aesthetically pleasing than the crawl. Perhaps this is because it looks less efficient as a way of moving through the water, since there appears to be a disproportionate expenditure of effort in relation to the achievement. A similar example is race walking which, even at its best, never seems to me to be an aesthetically pleasing event. Perhaps, again, this is because one feels that the same effort would be more efficiently employed if the walker broke into a run. In each of these cases one is implicitly setting a wider context, seeing the action in terms of a wider purpose, of movement through water, and movement over the ground respectively. But what of a sport such as weight-lifting, which many regard as providing little or no aesthetic pleasure, though it is hard to discover a wider context, a more economical direction to to a wider or similar end in another activity with which we are implicitly comparing it? Perhaps the explanation lies simply in a general tendency to prefer, from an aesthetic point of view, sports which allow for smooth, flowing movements in the achievement of the primary purpose. Nevertheless, for the devotee, there are, no doubt, "beautiful" lifts, so called because they accomplish maximum direction of effort.

Four objections.

At this point it may be worth pausing to consider four objections which have been raised against my argument, partly because they have to be met in their own right, and partly because, a consideration of them will clarify some salient features of the argument.

(1) It was objected that the aesthetic cannot be merely a way of perceiving an activity or object, since this would fail to account for the fact that some objects and activities are more aesthetically interesting than others. To take my own example, cannot the attractive appearance of the car be changed by altering certain features of the car? Similarly cannot gracefulness be added to or subtracted from a hockey movement?

The interesting aspect of this objection is that it can be seen to be self-defeating, in that so far from providing an objection to my thesis, it provides support for it. In order to appreciate this, it is necessary to recognise a crucial distinction concerning the use of the term "aesthetic". It is used in two ways, which I shall broadly characterise as (a) evaluative, and (b) conceptual. An example of the former would be "Borzov is an aesthetic runner". This is to use the term in a positively evaluative way, and is roughly equivalent to "graceful".

But it is clearly the latter with which I am concerned, and this sense includes both the beautiful and the ugly; the graceful and the clumsy; the aesthetically interesting and the aesthetically uninteresting. Thus. for example, imagine that I say to you, "What do you think of that car?" You reply enthusiastically, "It is excellent - fast, reliable, and comfortable". "No", I interject, "I don't mean that. I mean what do you think of it aesthetically?" Your enthusiasm wanes, and you shrug your shoulders. You just don't find it aesthetically interesting.

Now we can see why the objection is self defeating, since whether the car be aesthetically attractive or not, it has to be brought under the concept to be considered in that way at all. So to say that some activities are more aesthetically interesting than others is to concede my point.

(2) Nevertheless, it was objected, the aesthetic is still a matter of content, since changing features of the car or movement may change one's aesthetic evaluation of it. To consider the aesthetic as a way of considering an activity cannot account for differences of opinion. One

person might consider synchronised swimming as ugly, another as beautiful. It is possible to account for this difference only in terms of content.

In reply to this objection I would ask the objector to contrast the following cases. If you and I disagree about the content of a cake, it is possible to resolve the dispute by empirical testing procedures. It could be sent off for chemical analysis. But if we disagree about the aesthetic quality of a movement, how could that dispute be resolved by an analysis of its content? Perhaps the point can be made even more clearly if we take the example of a painting. A comprehensive list of the physical properties of the paint and canvas might be compiled by experts, but that has so far told us nothing whatsoever about its aesthetic quality, or even what it is about, in the simplest sense. You and I might entirely agree about the content of the painting, yet still disagree about its aesthetic quality. Quantitative, scientific testing, procedures, i.e. to determine content, are entirely irrelevant to questions of aesthetic appreciation. Nevertheless, such appreciation is answerable to objective features of the object or activity. The scientific is not the only way of considering objective features of things. It is, as I pointed out above, precisely the failure to understand this point which has led to such a plethora of confused and mystical writing on aesthetics. No wonder that Elton[4] has said that aesthetics is the natural home of rapturous and soporific effusion.

(3) It was objected that the distinction I have drawn between the purposive and the aesthetic sports is arbitrary. For instance, to take a paradigm case, a choreographer has a purpose, namely that of accomplishing the goal of creating the dance.

This objection reveals a failure to appreciate the force of the distinction. In contradistinction to purposive activities, where the end can be specified independently of the means of achieving it, this is not

possible in the case of the choreographer. For if we ask "What was the purpose of creating that dance?", then, from the aesthetic point of view, no comprehensive answer can be given independently of the dance itself.

(4) It has been objected against my account that it fails to differentiate the aesthetic from the skilful. I have not space to deal fully with this objection, but I think two points are sufficient to overcome it. First, as a careful reading of my paper will reveal, my argument, if valid, shows that in the sphere of sport the two concepts are intimately related, but it also shows that they are not entirely co-extensive. I have marked some points of divergence.

Second, even if it were true that my argument had not differentiated the two concepts that would not constitute an objection to it. For why if an action is skilful should it not also be aesthetically pleasing? Wittgenstein, in the Tractatus,[5] wrote "Ethics and Aesthetics are one". Whether or not one would want to accept that statement will depend on his argument for it. It cannot simply be dismissed on the grounds that it must be self-defeating, since a genuine characterisation of the aesthetic could not also characterise the ethical.

The supposed objection is a manifestation of the common, seductive, yet radically misconceived essentialist fallacy. It presupposes that to have characterised the aesthetic is to have found those essential features which can be shared by no other concept. This is like denying that ginger can be an essential ingredient in ginger cakes on the ground that it is also an ingredient in ginger ale. The objector produced no argument, but was unable to accept that an account which also fitted the skilful could be adequate as an account of the aesthetic in sport. So, in response to this supposed objection I could simply reply: "You are right, I concede that my argument does not entirely distinguish the aesthetic from the skilful. But so far from constituting an objection to my argument, what you

have provided is a rough summary of it."

Context and aesthetic feeling.

The foregoing argument raises two related considerations which have a crucial bearing upon the notion of aesthetic experience in sport. First, movement cannot be considered aesthetically in isolation, but only in the context of a particular action in a particular sport. A graceful sweep of the left arm may be very effective in a dance, but the same movement may look ugly and absurd as part of a service action in tennis, or of a pitcher's action in baseball, since it detracts from the ideal of total concentration of effort to achieve the specific task. A specific movement is aesthetically satisfying only if, in the context of the action as a whole, it is seen as forming a unified structure which is regarded as the most economical and efficient method of achieving the required end.

Second, there is a danger of serious misconception arising from a mistaken dependence upon feelings as criteria of aesthetic quality, whether in sport or in any other activity, including dance and the other arts.[6] The misconception is to take the feeling of the performer, or spectator as the ultimate arbiter. But such a feeling is intelligible only if it can be identified by observable phenomena. This is part of what Wittgenstein[7] meant by saying that an inner process stands in need of outward criteria. It is the observable physical movement which identifies the feeling and not, as is often believed, the inner feeling which suffuses the physical movement with aesthetic quality or meaning. That is, the feeling could not even be understood as a feeling, still less as the specific feeling it is, if it were not experienced in a certain set of empirically recognisable circumstances. We should resist the temptation, commonly encountered in discussion of dance and other forms of movement, to believe that it is how a movement feels which determines its effectiveness, whether aesthetic or purposive. That it feels right is no

guarantee that it is right. Inexperienced oarsmen in an "eight" are often tempted to heave their bodies round violently in an attempt to propel the boat more quickly, because such an action gives a feeling of much greater power. But in fact it will upset the balance of the boat and thus reduce the effectiveness of the rowing of the crew as a whole. The most effective stroke action can best be judged by the coach who is watching the whole performance from the bank, not by the feeling of the individual oarsmen, or even of all the crew. Similarly, in tennis and skiing, to take just two examples, the feeling of an action is often misleading as to its maximum efficiency. A common error in skiing is to lean into the slope and, at a certain stage in his progress, a learner starts to make turns for the first time which feel very good. Yet, however exhilarating the feeling, if he is leaning the wrong way he will be considerably hampered from making further progress, because, in fact, he is not directing his effort in the most effective way. There are innumerable other such examples one could cite, and this, of course, has important implications for education. If the arbiter of success in physical activities is what the students feel, rather than what they can be observed to do, it is hard to see how such activities can be learned and taught.

However, it is important not to misunderstand this point by going to the opposite extreme, for I am not saying that we cannot be guided by such feelings, or that they are of no value. My point is that they are useful and reliable only to the extent that they are answerable to patterns of behaviour which can be <u>observed</u> to be most efficiently directed onto the particular task. This reveals the connection between this and the preceding point, for it is clear that the character and efficiency of a particular movement cannot be considered in isolation from the whole set of related movements of which it forms a part, and from the purpose towards which they are, as a whole directed. Thus the context in which the

movement occurs is a factor of an importance which it is impossible to exaggerate, since the feeling could not even be understood, let alone evaluated, if it were not normally experienced as part of an empirically recognisable action.

In this respect I should like to question what is often said about the aesthetic attitude, namely that it is essentially or predominantly contemplative. Reid,[8] for instance, says: "In an aesthetic situation we attend to what we perceive in what is sometimes called a 'contemplative' way". Now, it may be that a concern with the arts and the aesthetic is largely, or even for the most part, contemplative, but I see no reason to deny, indeed I see good reason to insist, that one can have what are most appropriately called aesthetic <u>feelings</u> while actually performing an activity, as long as it is clear that the criterion is answerability to an empirically observable context. A perfect smash in tennis, a well executed dive, a finely timed stroke in squash, a smoothly accomplished series of movements in gymnastics, an outing in an "eight" when the whole crew is pulling in unison, with unwavering balance, a training run when one's body seems to be completely under one's control, and there are many other examples - for many who engage in sport the feelings derived from such performances are part of the enjoyment of participation in these activities. And "aesthetic" seems the most appropriate way to characterise such feelings. Reid says:[9] "... a dancer or actor in the full activity of dancing or acting is often, perhaps always, in some degree contemplating the product of his activity." And later, of games players: "There is no time while the operation is going on to dwell upon aesthetic qualities ... Afterwards, the participant may look back upon his experience contemplatively with perhaps some aesthetic satisfaction." Again,[10] of the aesthetic in cricket: "The batsman may enjoy it too, although at the moment of play he has no time to dwell upon it. But to produce exquisite strokes for contemplation is not part of his dominating motive as he is actually

engaged in the game ..." Yet the batsman's aesthetic experience is not necessarily dependent upon his having time, at the moment of playing the stroke, to "dwell upon it", nor is it limited to a retrospective contemplation of his performance. If he plays a perfectly timed cover drive, with the ball flashing smoothly and apparently effortlessly from the face of his bat to the boundary, the aesthetic satisfaction of the batsman is intrinsic to what he is doing. The aesthetic is not a distinct but perhaps concurrent activity, and it need not depend upon detached or retrospective contemplation. His experience is inseparable from the stroke he is playing, since it is identifiable only by the way in which he is performing. His particular action, in that context, is a criterion of his feeling, and it is quite natural, unexceptionable, and perhaps unavoidable to call such feelings "aesthetic". "Kinaesthetic" or "tactile" would not tell the whole story by any means, since producing the same physical movement in other circumstances, say in a laboratory, would not produce the same feeling. Indeed, it is significant that we tend naturally to employ aesthetic terms to describe the feelings involved in such actions. We say that a stroke felt "beautiful", and it was so to the extent that it was efficiently executed in relation to the specific purpose of the action in the sport concerned. Many participants in physical activities have experienced the exquisite feeling of, for instance, performing a dance or gymnastic sequence, of sailing over the bar in a pole vault, and of accomplishing a fluent series of Christis with skis immaculately parallel. It is difficult to know how to describe these feelings other than as "aesthetic". It is certainly the way in which those of us who have taken part in such activities tend spontaneously to refer to them. So, though I do not wish to deny that contemplation is an important part of the aesthetic, I would suggest that it is not exhaustive. It is by no means unusual to experience aesthetic feelings, properly so called, while actually engaged and fully involved in physical activities. Moreover, many of us who have derived

considerable pleasure, from a wide variety of sporting activities, would want to insist that such aesthetic experience constitutes a large part of the enjoyment of participation.

Are the aesthetic sports art?

In the case of the purposive sports, then, as the actions become more and more directly aimed, with maximum economy and efficiency, at the required end, they become more and more specific, and the gap between means and end is to that extent reduced. That is, increasingly it is less possible to specify the means apart from the end. In these sports the gap will, nevertheless, never be entirely closed - there cannot be the complete identification of means and end, or more accurately perhaps, the inappropriateness of the distinction between means and end, which obtains in the case of art. For even if, in fact, there is a single most efficient and economical way of achieving a particular end, this is a contingent matter. The evolution of improved high jumping methods is a good example. The scissor jump was once regarded as the most efficient method, but it has been overtaken by the straddle, the Western roll and the Fosbury flop.

But what of the aesthetic sports? Can they justifiably claim to be art forms? I am inclined to give a negative answer, for two reasons. First, as we have seen, there is good reason to doubt whether the means/end distinction ever quite becomes inappropriate, though it almost reaches that point, even in the aesthetic sports. That is, unlike dance, in these sports there is still an externally specifiable aim even though, for instance, it is very difficult to specify what the gymnast is trying to achieve apart from the way in which he is trying to achieve it. Perhaps this is what some physical educationists are getting at when they say, rather vaguely, that a distinction between gymnastics and dance is that the former is objective, while the latter is subjective.

However, it is the second reason which seems to me the more important one, and this concerns the distinction which seems to be almost universally ignored, or over-simplified and therefore misconceived, between the aesthetic and the artistic. The aesthetic applies, for instance, to sunsets, birdsong and mountain ranges, whereas the artistic is limited, at least in its central uses, to artefacts or performances intentionally created by man - objets trouvés, if they are accepted as art, would be so in an extended sense. Throughout this paper I have so far followed the common practice of using "aesthetic" as a broad generic term of which the artistic is a species. My reason for doing so is that the difference between the two terms is of no consequence to my main argument, since their logical character, with respect to the possibility of distinguishing between means and end, is the same. However, when we are discussing the question of whether sport can justifiably be regarded as an art form, the distinction becomes crucial. This issue seems to me to be a big one, which would take us too far afield to examine in the detail it merits, i.e. in relation to the arts generally, but it will be sufficient here to restrict our attention to the art form most closely related to our present enquiry, namely dance. It seems to me that there are cases where one may appreciate a dance performance aesthetically without appreciating it artistically. Some years ago I went to watch a performance by Ram Gopal, the great Indian classical dancer, and I was quite enthralled by the exhilarating quality of his movements. Yet I did not appreciate, because I could not have understood, his dance artistically, for there is an enormous number of precise meanings given to hand gestures in Indian classical dance, of which I knew none. So it seems clear that my appreiation was of the aesthetic not the artistic.

Reid is prepared to allow that what I call the aesthetic sports may justifiably be called art, but I suggest that he reaches this conclusion

as a result of failing sufficiently to recognise the importance to that question of this aspect of the difference between the two concepts. For example, he says:[11] "When we are talking about the category of art, as distinct from the category of the aesthetic, we must be firm, I think in insisting that in art there is someone who has made (or is making) purposefully an artifact, and that in his purpose there is contained as an essential part the idea of producing an object (not necessarily a 'thing': it could be a movement or a piece of music) in some medium for aesthetic contemplation." Again:[12] "... the movement (of a gymnast, skater, diver), carried out in accordance with the general formula, has aesthetic quality fused into it, transforming it into an art quality ..." And again: "The question is whether the production of aesthetic value is intrinsically part of the purpose of these sports. (If so, on my assumptions, they will be in part, at least art.)".

According to Reid, then, the artistic is that which is intentionally created or performed for its aesthetic value, but I want to suggest that this overlooks the important factor in the distinction between the two concepts which is implicit in my example of Indian dance. In any art form, to put it roughly, there is at least the possibility of a close involvement with life situations - for example the arts characteristically concern themselves with contemporary moral, social, political and emotional issues. Yet this is not true of the aesthetic, even if the object under consideration has been created for an aesthetic purpose. For example, a wallpaper pattern is normally designed to give aesthetic pleasure, but I would not on that account, at least in the great majority of cases, want to call it artistic. To relate this to our present enquiry, it seems to me that even in those sports in which the aesthetic is intrinsic, and which are therefore intentionally performed to give aesthetic satisfaction, we cannot justifiably call them art forms. For in skating, diving, trampolining and gymnastics the performer does not have the possibility of

expressing through his particular medium his view of life situations, It is difficult to imagine a gymnast who included in his sequence movements which expressed his view of war, or of love, or of any other such issue. Certainly if he did so it would, unlike art, detract to that extent from his performance.

Of course, this is inadequate as an examination of the difference between the aesthetic and the artistic, but I think it points to an aspect of that difference which would repay further thought. There are difficult cases, even in the accredited arts, such as "abstract" paintings and dances, where we are urged not to look for a meaning but simply to enjoy the line, colour, movement etc., without trying to read anything into it. But it does seem to me that an art form, properly so called, must at least allow for the possibility of the artist's comment, through his art, on life situations, and this is not possible in diving, skating, trampolining and gymnastics. Incidentally, if I am right, this may pose problems for those who suggest that these aesthetic sports may provide one method of, perhaps an introduction to, education in the arts, though of course this is not in the least to cast doubt on their aesthetic value. Superb aesthetically, at their best, these sports undoubtedly are, but they are not, in my view, art.

Notes

1. W. J. Anthony, "Sport and P.E. as a means of aesthetic education", British Journal of P.E., Vol.60, No.179, (London: P.E. Association, Nottingham Place, 1968)

2. R. Carlisle, "The concept of physical education", Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, Vol. 3 (Jan. 1969)

3. L.A. Reid, "Sport, the aesthetic and art", British Journal of Educational Studies, Vol. 18, (1970)

4. W. Elton, Aesthetics and Language, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), p.2

5. L. Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico Philosophicus (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961) §6:421

6. This complex issue has been considered more fully in my recent book, Expression in Movement and the Arts (London: Lepus Books, 1974)

7. L. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), § 580

8. Op. cit., p.248

9. Ibid., p.252

10. Ibid., p.254

11. Ibid., p.249

12. Ibid., p.258